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## **Afghanistan Mission Remains Vital to U.S. National Security.**

Afghanistan is the epicenter of where al Qaeda planned and launched the 9/11 attacks against innocent Americans and continues to be an operational location for al Qaeda and its affiliated groups.

The U.S. led effort in Afghanistan and the sacrifices of American troops have led to an improving environment where Afghans are now providing their own security and making progress towards a more secure nation.

Afghanistan is the birth place of al-Qaeda and is unique in its vulnerability to once again becoming a safe-haven for terrorists if a strong government is not supported. Finalizing a Bilateral Security Agreement and retaining a credible residual presence, with input from our commanders on the ground, are essential to sustaining our security gains in Afghanistan. America's warfighters have made tremendous sacrifices to protect vital U.S. national security interests. These sacrifices demand national leadership to see their mission through and finish the fight.

House Republicans will remain vigilant and demand accountability from the President regarding the post-2014 missions, force levels, and resources necessary to minimize the risk that Afghanistan could be used again as a platform for terrorist attacks against the United States.

House Republicans will not talk about exits and end dates. We will continue to honor the accomplishments of our troops, and fight to ensure our forces in harm's way receive the support and resources necessary to do the job our nation asks of them.

### **Afghans Providing Their Own Security**

The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have seen their capabilities expand rapidly since 2009, while insurgent territorial influence and kinetic capabilities have remained static. Afghan security forces are now successfully providing security for their own people, fighting their own battles, and holding the gains made by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in the last decade. The insurgency can mount attacks but generally cannot capture or destroy well-defended targets, and are unable to hold significant territory in the face of numerically superior Afghan forces. ANSF progress means that the biggest uncertainties facing Afghanistan are no longer primarily military.

The ANSF – a force in its infancy five years ago – can now maintain the gains made by a coalition of 50 nations with the best trained and equipped forces in the world. The ANSF now conducts 95% of conventional operations and 98% of special operations in Afghanistan.

### **Security Leading To Prosperity**

- 6 million (out of 15 million) Afghans fled for Pakistan and Iran during the 1980s and 1990s. Since the fall of the Taliban, more than 5 million have returned home.
- Kabul ranks as the fifth-fastest-growing city in the world.
- An estimated 500,000 people are employed in the private sector.
- Extraction of oil and precious metals could account for 45% of Afghanistan's GDP within a decade.
- The rural population is gaining access to roads, electricity, and irrigation networks.
- Over eight million children are enrolled in schools—and 2.6 million are girls.
- There are now 40,000 young women attending public and private universities, or technical institutes, with more enrolling each year.

### **A Country Moving In The Right Direction**

- City dwellers are letting go of tribal and sectarian links and embracing a more universal Afghan identity.
- Afghanistan is preparing for its third complete cycle of presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014 and 2015.
- The Taliban's approval rating, measured by the BBC, NBC, and others over the years has consistently come in at under 10% nationally, with less than 30% even in the Taliban heartland of Kandahar.
- A poll of some 6,000 Afghans conducted by the Asia Foundation found that in 2012, 52% of Afghans thought their country was on the right track.
- Currently, women make up 27% of the Afghan parliament, which has 249 members. By comparison, women make up approximately 33% of the European Parliament.